



**BAPTIST PRESS**

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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February 27, 1974

**WMU Board Responds  
to Committee of 15**

**BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)**--The Executive Board of Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) of the Southern Baptist Convention has responded to comments by the "Committee of Fifteen" dealing with the 1.1 million-member auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

The Committee of Fifteen, which has been studying the agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention, reported to the SBC Executive Committee on February 20.

WMU's eleven-page document disagreed with the Committee of Fifteen's contention that missions education has declined in the SBC and gave progress reports on the committee's concerns about drops in WMU enrolment and income.

The WMU response was distributed at the meeting of the SBC Executive Committee February 20, just after the Executive Committee voted to receive the Committee of Fifteen's "report to the agencies" and called for response to 97 specific "concerns" within one year.

Mrs. R. L. Mathis, president of WMU, said the response was distributed for information. A preliminary draft of the document had already been mailed to Committee of Fifteen members prior to the Executive Committee session.

"We will continue to study the questions raised by the Committee of Fifteen and will bring formal response as requested next year," Mrs. Mathis said. "Meanwhile, this statement will let Southern Baptists know that WMU is aware of its needs and opportunities and is working on them."

WMU leaders did not discuss with the Executive Committee the bulk of their statement, but did refer to it just before the Executive Committee adopted a Committee of Fifteen recommendation calling for agencies to plan a strategy for missions education.

Committee of Fifteen spokesmen said that as an auxiliary of the SBC, Woman's Missionary Union is not an SBC "agency," had cooperated voluntarily in the study and is free to deal with committee "concerns" as it deems appropriate.

Miss Alma Hunt, executive secretary of WMU, said that WMU will cooperate fully in the recommended study of missions education along with the Home Mission Board, Foreign Mission Board, Brotherhood Commission and Sunday School Board, and will help develop a strategy for missions education. However, Miss Hunt questioned the committee's concern about missions education.

The WMU response said that while Committee of Fifteen members "feel that Southern Baptists are not as well informed on missions as they once were," WMU leaders feel that Baptists are better informed than ever.

As evidence of an all-time high in missions understanding, the WMU statement pointed to recent efforts in churchwide mission study, churchwide involvement in record-breaking special missions offerings, increases in missions volunteers, increases in Cooperative Program gifts and attention to missions in denominational publications.

"We do not claim to be doing a perfect job," the statement read. "We stand ready to join in a study to improve the communications of missions information."

The Executive Committee also adopted a recommendation calling for WMU and other church program organizations to review their task statements. Mrs. Mathis, speaking from the WMU Board's response, said that tasks are periodically reviewed through normal processes and that the recommended task study would take place anyway.

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Answering the Committee of Fifteen's concern about a one-fourth drop in WMU enrolment during the past decade, WMU leaders told about "Giant Step," a goal-oriented enlistment campaign, and about structural and promotional emphases on enlistment.

"In the future in teaching missions, we will give more emphasis to the spiritual development of the individual woman and we will encourage women in personal evangelism," the statement said of efforts to appeal to more women.

"We view the decline in enrolment as our most urgent challenge," the statement said.

WMU attributed the membership decline to the effects of changing roles of women, to changed methods of counting and reporting membership and to the effects of radical reorganization resulting from convention action in 1959 calling for interprogram coordination.

The statement reported that Woman's Missionary Union is operating in the black despite recent financial strain. Originally supported totally by contributions from the two mission boards, WMU now earns its own income from sale of magazines and other literature, except for a 4.2 per cent contribution from the mission boards.

As pointed out in the Committee of Fifteen report, WMU magazines have been losing subscribers for several years. WMU leaders reported signs of increased subscriptions and said, "We are grateful that our loss of income has not curtailed our work."

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Child Care Executives  
Name '74-75 Officers

2/27/74

MYRTLE BEACH, S. C. (BP)--J. Ivey Miller, administrator of the Mexican Baptist Children's Home of San Antonio, Tex., was elected president of the Child Care Executives of Southern Baptists, during their 26th annual meeting here.

Other officers elected during the mid-February meeting, attended by executives of Baptist children's homes and their wives were: Charles Wright of Texas Baptist Children's Home in Round Rock, secretary-treasurer; George Norton, superintendent of the Baptist Children's Home in Jacksonville, Fla., first vice president; and Erba A. Butler, superintendent of the Tennessee Baptist Children's Home, Memphis branch, second vice president.

A spokesman for the organization said the group's members represent 30 Child Care institutions in 17 states across the United States. The next Child Care Executives' meeting will be in Jacksonville, Fla., Feb. 18-20, 1975, the spokesman said.

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Elmer S. West Jr.  
Accepts Pastorate

2/27/74

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Elmer S. West Jr., director of program development for the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention has accepted a call to become pastor of the Ginter Park Baptist Church in Richmond, Va.

West, 51, who has been with the social action agency of Southern Baptists since 1968, will assume his duties at the church May 1.

Foy Valentine, executive secretary of the commission, explained, "that church's great gain is the Christian Life Commission's great loss."

West, in announcing his resignation, said, "In this new pastoral role I feel I will be more sensitive to the issues which strongly influence people's lives than I was in earlier pastorates."

"The experiences (with the commission)," explained West, "have been instructive, demanding, sometimes frustrating but, on the whole, fulfilling. I have a deep sense of gratitude to Foy Valentine and to my other colleagues."

Among his various commission responsibilities, West produced materials for the annual

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race relations emphasis among Southern Baptists and was coordinator for the commission's annual national seminars.

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On Baptist Press story mailed 2/26/74, headlined, "'Christ Makes Man Total Person,' Astronaut Says," insert the following after the third from last graph (beginning with "Pogue said he has a completely. . .")

In the more immediate future, he will become Dr. William R. Pogue. Oklahoma Baptist University has announced that it will confer on him an honorary degree at the school's fall convocation, Sept. 11, 1974.

(Pick up with second from last graph, beginning, "Although he has worked with fellow. .")

--Thanks  
Baptist Press